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DIGITAL DETOX FOR THE HOLIDAYS: ARE WE ADDICTED?

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Abstract

Invention of Internet and usage of smart phones and tablets has changed our life style in last 15 years. Some applications are life saving tools for smart phone addicted consumers. According to a survey, at the end of 2015 mobile Internet users will take over desktop Internet users. Smart phones are an inseparable part of our life.

People on holiday want a stress free period during their journey. We all desire a wonderful holiday as a gift to ourselves. Why do people go on holiday? Businessman and women go on holiday as a break from their normal duties due to the health consequences posed with failure to break. On the other hand, families and other individuals go on holidays for reasons such as relaxation and adventures among others.

Since we use smart devices often, we take them with us on holiday and often use them as a communication, entertainment tool during our holiday. What happens if we do not use our smart devices during our holiday? Can we survive or not? Digital detox holiday provides a chance to decrease stress and focus on social interaction in the real world.

Some hotels realized that they may offer digital free environment for the guests and this may attract some customers to the digital detox hotels. On the other hand, acceptance of this idea for a community will not be easy.

The aim of this paper is to discuss a new travel trend that nearly rejects the digital life during a holiday and focus on individual needs rather than virtual environment.

Key words: Addicted, Detox, Digital, Digitox, Holiday, Smartphone

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I. Introduction

Reaching Internet has been changing its form and smart device (IOS and Android devices) usage is getting popular among social media users. Smartphone appeared in 2007 and later mobile users became the new Internet users in the society. More and more people search, mail, watch or listen music by using mobile devices 7/24. In last seven years technology improvements have seen new systems, powerful handsets, faster and cheaper data connections touch screens, app downloads and addicted smart phone users.

Smartphone has transformed the consumer's behavior. According to Google all smart devices (tablets, smart phones and wearable tech) are cost effective, lightweight and will overtake the desktop in the next few years. Mobile phones are no longer used to make call only but people use them as a multi activity device.

With the growing usage of smart devices and tablets, people are getting more addicted to their devices. The Google report "Our Mobile Planet" shows that in Turkey, 68% of Smartphone users were online in 2013, that means they are connected 7/24. Such a number may increase in near future and than people may suffer from side effects of this addiction.

The term digital detox recently used for smart device addicted people.

Today hotel companies offer digital services for the guest comfort. Some of these services are targeting smart phone users on the other hand limited numbers of hotels are offering traditional services that do not include smart device usage.

Definition of digital detox is: A period of time during which a person refrains from using electronic devices such as Smartphones or computers, regarded as an opportunity to reduce stress or focus on social interaction in the physical world (Oxforddictionaries, 2014).

II. Literature Survey

2.1. Smartphone usage intention

We have seen a huge change in human behavior; complete new devices are dominating our lives. World Smartphone user will reach to 1,75 billion in 2014. Almost two-fifths of all mobile phone customers will use a Smartphone at the end of 2014. The survey shows that 48,8% of mobile phone users and 33,8% of population will use Smartphone users by 2017. (Emarketer, 2014).

Table 1
Smartphone Users and Penetration Worldwide, 2012-2017

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Smartphone users (billions)	1.13	1.43	1.75	2.03	2.28	2.50
% change	68.4%	27.1%	22.5%	15.9%	12.3%	9.7%
% of mobile phone users	27.6%	33.0%	38.5%	42.6%	46.1%	48.8%
% of population	16.0%	20.2%	24.4%	28.0%	31.2%	33.8%

Note: Individuals of any age who own at least one smart phone and use it at least once per month.
Source: eMarketer Dec 2013

In Turkey, Turkish Statistical Institute conducted a survey in the first quarter of 2013. According to the survey 41.1 % of Internet users aged 16-74 used mobile or smart phones in Turkey (Turkstats, 2013). A survey is conducted by internet survey company called comScore. According to the results, millions of visitors getting news from the Smartphone. Local media group Hurriyet ranked first in February with 4.1

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million unique visitors accessing from smart phones, with more than two-thirds of those visitors coming from Android phones. Milliyet Gazetecilik ve Yayıncılık secured the #2 position with 3.8 million unique users visiting from smart phones, followed by Nokta.com Medya with 3.3 million Smartphone visitors. Nokta.com Medya ranked at the top of the list in terms of tablet audience with 1.2 million visitors, followed by Milliyet Gazetecilik ve Yayıncılık and Hurriyet, both with nearly 1.1 million visitors.

Table 2
Top 20 Properties in Turkey Ranked by Mobile Web Visitors (000) on Smart phones February 2014

	Total Unique Visitors (000)			
	All Smartphones	iPhone	Android Phone	All Tablets
Hurriyet Internet Group	4.130	1.302	2.828	1.050
Milliyet Gazetecilik Ve Yayıncılık	3.868	1.170	2.697	1.076
Nokta.com Medya	3.317	962	2.354	1.273
Yeni Medya	2.983	853	2.131	876
Mynet A.S.	2.228	676	1.552	927
Ciner Medya Grubu	1.751	655	1.096	401
Sahibinden.com	1.750	528	1.222	751
Dailymotion	1.688	485	1.203	667
eBay	1.346	465	881	486
Dogan Gazetecilik	1.341	416	925	403
Stargazete.com	1.323	412	911	435
Dogan TV	1.303	413	890	478
Turkcell	1.145	412	733	191
Bugun.com.tr	1.099	335	764	348
Dogan Online	1.099	371	728	394
Sozcu.com.tr	1.090	491	599	272
AccuWeather Sites	1.086	40	1.046	85
Goal Sites	1.014	232	783	272
Turk Medya	963	312	651	224
Turkuvaz Yayın	877	317	560	384

Source: comScore Mobile Matrix

These figures show that smart digital devices in Turkey widely used for reading daily newspapers and doing shopping.

Beside reading newspapers and doing shopping, checking e mails and socializing through Facebook, Twitter like apps.

2.2. *Nomophobia: The way to digital detox*

Some studies show that there is a group of people evaluating smart technologies, including Smartphones, mobile apps, etc enlarge and change the classical border of tourism (Germann Molz, 2012; Mascheroni, 2007; Paris, 2010, 2012; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Wang, Park, & Fesenmaier, 2012; White & White, 2007). Travelers use the devices for booking, navigating, ticketing, boarding, socializing and communicating for the journey.

The increase of the benefits of technology makes us dependent on it. The increasing numbers of teenagers with access to mobile internet technology (Lenhart, et al., 2012) appears as potential explanation for the recognized problems related to Internet use. Smartphone addiction has become so widespread and attracted so much concern; it even has a name "Nomophobia".

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UK Post Office states that, 13 million UK citizens suffered from “Nomophobia” (no mobile phobia) in 2008. Nomophobia is the fear of being out of mobile phone contact. 2,163 people sampled for this study. Study explains that 53% of users in the UK tend to be anxious when they "lose their mobile phone, run out of battery or credit, or have no network coverage". Results show that about 58% of men and 48% of women familiarity the nomophobia, and if their mobile phones are off additional 9% feel stressed.

Although technology is a driving force for many years to come with tourism, some hoteliers have identified a niche market for those who want to “escape” from digital life they are addicted, they offer isolated accommodation facilities with no smart services (Sudgen, 2014).

The World Travel Market Global Trends Report, 2012 in association with market researcher Euromonitor International states that digital detox packages are offered at discounted prices. Hotel guest stay in technology free rooms and use relaxation packages. Family time and quality human time with family members is an important issue of the digital detox. The more people are connected and stay online stress level of them increase in near future.

Another study conducted by the Radicati Group report that usage of total worldwide daily email traffic will increase from 182,9 billion in 2013 to 206,6 billion in 2017. 100 billion these emails came (sent/received) from business sources in 2013 and it will increase to 132,1 billion in 2017 (Radicati, 2013). On the other hand consumer email (sent/received) will see a slowdown in the same period, from 82,4 billion to 74,5 billion. The main reason behind this slow down is the Instant Messaging (IM) services and social networking. During the same period we will see a remarkable increase on social networking accounts and users. Social network accounts will increase 3,2 billion accounts in 2013 to 4,8 billion accounts in 2017 and 400 million additional users will join the system and 1,58 billion people will be online. By 2017 mobile email user number will not be less than the mobile instant message users, reaching to 1,78 billion.

III. Problem and Solutions

3.1. Digital detox in tourism sector

Holidays represent a valuable period of our busy life, and most of the time it is sold as “a once in a lifetime experience” (Ryan, 1997). Therefore, holidays are desirable for every tourist and every tourist should have such an experience. The accommodation sector offers a variety of choices as “escape-aids, problem-solvers, suppliers of strength, energy, new lifeblood and happiness” (Krippendorf, 1987). Technology had been preventing us from being fully present.

A Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) has been supporting National Day of Unplugging (NDU) since 2010 in the USA. Every year one weekend in March National Day of Unplugging is organized as a modern Sabbatical activity. (Jewishcamp.org, 2014) NDU runs from the first sundown on Friday, to sundown on Saturday. The activity encourages people of all backgrounds to unplug during the period and follow 10 simple suggestions. By doing this they try to slow down lives in a busy world.

Some food and beverage outlets offer promotions to the customers for dropping their smart devices with the receptionist for the entirety of the dinner. Eva Restaurant in Los Angeles offers a 5% discount since the summer of 2012 (Money.cnn, 2012). They want people to connect again in person. Eva notifies its guests of its cell phone policy with a statement on its menu.

3.2. Digital Detox hotels

Most of hotel the companies try to offer technology facilities, applications and technology features makes customers demanding in every stay. Some 63% of UK hotels now offer free Wi-Fi, according to hotel booking website HRS.

Smart phone applications try to offer much better hotel experiences from check in to check out for the guests. One example is called Mystaymanager. It is a mobile application, introduced in February of 2010. A guest can book change or cancel a reservation and organize their stay by using the application. Tourist can manage his or her own preferences order room service, read messages, schedule a wake-up call, view billing information and check out. The real-time integration with OPERA PMS empowers the hotel guest to connect with hotel. It simplifies business and leisure travel, attracting more guests to the hotel.

HotelNewspapers and Good Morning News are the world's largest hotel news publications of KVH Media Group. The service is delivered hotel guests in 192 countries free of charge, only the hotels sign up a contract with KVH Media Group. Newspapers are delivered by email in PDF or read by an application, at present 38 titles published in 11 different languages. Also the application is compatible with iPad too. On the other hand, digital detox hotels or digital detox packages provide completely different selling points for a technology break.

Hotels offer digital detox packages, software companies and some applications try to help the addicted Smartphone users to reduce the time spent with Smartphone interactions. An application called "Quiet" blocks notifications and changes your status on things like Skype to "busy" (Techland, 2013). Of course this can be done manually but a user can prefer a technology tool for a quiet period.

Users can delete social applications like Facebook, Twitter and they can reach the same services through the web browser, if it is needed.

Guest wellness may be improved by hotels digital detox packages. Technology-free hotels, health tourism centers, cruise lines and safaris present endless opportunities in the digital detox market, as these offers an ideal context for consumers to disconnect and relax.

Best examples of digital detox hotels in the world would be; 1- Westin Dublin, Ireland, 2. Grand Cayman Marriott, Cayman Islands, 3. Echo Valley Ranch & Spa, Canada, 4. Palm Island Resort, The Grenadines, 5. Kimpton Monaco, Chicago, USA, 6. Four Seasons at Peninsula Papagayo, Costa Rica, 7. Renaissance Pittsburgh, USA, 8. JW Marriott Cancun, Mexico, 9. Lifehouse Spa and Hotel, Essex, UK, 10. Jakes, Treasure Beach, Jamaica.

3.3. US Packages

Luxury Lake Placid Lodge in New York offers a two- night package, which is called " Check in to Check out". Participants hand over their digital devices at the front desk and take part in classes like cooking, snowshoeing expeditions, yoga, and other tech-free pursuits. The package costs starts from \$2,233 per room.

Digital Detox of San Francisco organizes three- and four-day retreats at various locations in Northern California, including the Shambhala Ranch in Mendocino County. Tourists take part in a variety of Zen-like activities, including yoga, hiking, and silent meals. The digital detox package start at \$700 per person for three nights.

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3.4. UK Packages

The Westin Dublin hotel gives you the possibility to leave from all that electronic devices. The Digital Detox package includes: accommodation, breakfast in bed each the morning, a handy Detox Survival Kit, featuring information on discovering the city of Dublin and a walking map, a newspaper, a relaxing white tea candle, a board game and a tree planting kit to take home with you, a safe in which to hide your gadgets for the duration of your stay. The package cost you €175.00. The package requires guests to hand in their Smartphone and gadgets at reception on arrival.

3.4. Packages in Turkey

Turkey is one of the world's top tourism destinations. According to the UNWTO in 2013 Turkey keeps 6th position in arrivals (37.8 Million) and 12th in receipts (US\$ Billion 27.997) (UNWTO, 2014). For a complete digital detox, going cold turkey, in Turkey still very possible. Actually just a few hotels in Turkey offer digital detox packages. This concept has not been realized by the managers of the hotels yet, hence meaningful digital detox packages just introduced in selected hotels.

A workshop organized by Şile Municipals, Istanbul in January 2014 saw a debate on digital detox tourism and possible contributions of it. The digital population of Istanbul and being a close destination (60 km) for local tourist, Şile can be a very useful digital detox destination for Istanbul. In Şile region there are 30 accommodation facilities, and most of them are small hotels with less than 35 rooms (Sema, 2014). At the end of the workshop it was accepted that hotels in the region easily offer digital detox packages especially for Istanbul residences.

IV. Conclusion

Tourism and technology are inseparable parts of our daily life. Recent trends proves that Smartphone usage among the population increasing rapidly, hence a type of addiction of these devices making the daily life and holiday period more complicated on one hand and easy one in another. As the holiday period of becomes important, feeling complete relaxation and being a refreshed person, all the factors that restrain a perfect holiday need to be eliminated.

According to WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) in Turkey accommodation sector has been developing the hotel facilities and offering latest convenient services to the tourist. Turkey shows strongest travel and tourism growth in Europe and among the G20 countries in 2013 (Wttc, 2014). New hotel concepts and packages try to attract tourist to the destinations. As a package digital detox offers a real escape from your digital habits and focus on holiday for relaxation. Reading personal emails, business e-mails, doing online banking, checking or updating social media profiles consuming an important time of our holiday period.

Most of the five star hotels offer the spa; the gym, Turkish bath and the sauna services and these are kind of digital detox services for the consumers. Beside these services there is not any digital detox packages offered by the hotels in Turkey. A need for digital detox in Turkey will start sooner or later, since the increasing number of Smartphone; the hoteliers may offer digital detox packages for treatment of the addicted tourist for a few days for a better world.

But if you're feeling like the Smartphone you bought now owns you, as a coast destination, Şile, can be an ideal digital detox destination especially for addicted residence of Istanbul.

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Author Biography



Experience

2011 February - Present Director of School of Advanced Vocational Studies, Member of Dođuş University Administration, Member of Dođuş University Senate
2008 May-Present Tourism and Hotel Management Program Head
2005 - Present Dođuş University Journal (ISSN 1302-6739) Referee.
2000-Present Dođuş University, Istanbul School of Advanced Vocational Studies, Tourism and Hotel Management Lecturer
1992-2000 Marmara Contemporary Sciences Foundation, Istanbul Hotel Management Programme Coordinator□
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December 1989 - January 1990 Parkway Hotel, Leeds, UK Food & Beverage - Banquet
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Universities

1998-2005 Marmara University Business Administration Istanbul, Ph.D. Diploma
1989 - 1991 University of Strathclyde Hotel Administration Glasgow, UK, MS Diploma
1983-1987 Uludađ University Tourism and Hotel Management Balıkesir, Degree Diploma

Courses Taught

E Commerce, Front Office Procedures, Front Office Automation Fidelio Opera, Food & Beverage Management, Food & Beverage Service, Industrial Food Production, Introduction to Hospitality, Hospitality Marketing, Travel Geography, International Tourism, Travel Management, Fidelio Materials Control.

Seminars & Conferences & Juror

"Usage of QR Code in the Tourism Industry" 24-29 April 2012 Fethiye Turkey. 6th World Conference for Graduate Research in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure
"Türk Turizm Sektörünün E-Ticaret Entegrasyonu", 21-23 November 2007 Ege Üniversitesi, Çeşme Ulusal Turizm Sempozyumu
Ministry of Education İstanbul 7th District "Project Based Skills Competition", Juror, 04 March 2010
Fenerbahçe100th Anniversary Sport and Science Congress, A Member of the Scientific Committee, Lutfi Kırdal Convention and Exhibition Centre 27 November-01 December 2007
Project Evaluation - İSTKA (İstanbul Kalkınma Ajansı) Istanbul Tourism Projects, Independent Evaluator June2011